



Church Newsletter

First Baptist Church of
Niles

Volume 2/Issue 19

WHAT WE ARE DOING? AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO?

IN THIS ISSUE

WELCOME

Welcome to Volume 2 of the FBCN Newsletter or the “current new normal” editions.

This week’s reading will be Psalm 95, titled Let Us Sing Songs of Praise
Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the
rock of our salvation! ² Let us come
into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him
with songs of praise! ³ For
the LORD is a great God, and a great
King above all gods. ⁴ In his hand are
the depths of the earth; the heights
of the mountains are his also. ⁵ The
sea is his, for he made it, and his
hands formed the dry land. ⁶ Oh
come, let us worship and bow
down; let us kneel before the LORD,
our Maker! ⁷ For he is our God, and
we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand. Today, if
you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden
your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the
day at Massah in the wilderness,
⁹ when your fathers put me to
the test and put me to the proof,
though they had seen my work.

¹⁰ For forty years I loathed that
generation and said, “They are a
people who go astray in their heart,
and they have not known my ways.”

¹¹ Therefore I swore in my wrath,
“They shall not enter my rest.”

This Sunday we will welcome our
new Senior Pastor Brandon Myers,
his wife Kaiti their daughters Eva
and Audrey, and son, Patrick. Pray
for the family as they make the
transition. Pray that the LORD will
anoint him with wisdom and desire
to accomplish HIS goals for the First
Baptist Church of Niles.

We invite you to Join us for a virtual
prayer meeting on Wednesdays at
7:00pm.

Wednesday Bible Study ([Click Here](#))

Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230

Password: 409807

One tap mobile

+13126266799

Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230

Password: 409807

Make sure you view the updated
prayer list. There are so many
needs.

In the next few weeks, I am going to be sharing some articles/sermons that have been a blessing to me and follow in the same vein of my writings. The first comes from a friend and Pastor, Charles Vitel dealing with a Christian's conscience.

Hello friends:

Did you know that there is a "Federal Conscience Fund?" Yes, there is! "The Conscience Fund" is one of three gift funds maintained by the United States Department of Treasury and is used for voluntary contributions - *and often anonymously*, from people who have stolen from or defrauded the United States Government. This fund was actually created in 1811 and received \$5 US dollars during the first year and over \$5.7 million during its first 175 years. Donations given to *The Conscience Fund* vary in size and reason. From a .09 cent donation for postage stamps to many thousands of dollars, sometimes in installments, to handmade quilts in an effort to settle unpaid tax bills.

Does anyone remember Edgar Allan Poe's short story - "The Telltale Heart?" It was first published in 1843. I remember watching the story on TV when I was a teenager. The main idea of the story is that when you commit a crime, like murder, you cannot escape your guilty conscience, no matter what the circumstances or your state of mind. *It is a story of paranoia and mental deterioration.* Summary: An unnamed narrator reflects on the heinous murder he committed of an old man. He then hides the body of the victim under the floorboards of his house. The killer becomes so obsessed with his crime, he convinces himself that *the old man's heart beat is audible* to everyone and will eventually point him out as the murderer. Actually, the murderer was hearing his own heartbeat amplified. His guilt-filled conscience was speaking to him. So, in

a fit of guilt, the murderer breaks down and confesses everything to the police.

God created mankind with a "Conscience" as man's *self-judging faculty. It is a moral awareness that is within all of us.* Because God has written His law on man's heart - mankind knows the basic standard of right and wrong. *When a person violates that standard, his conscience produces guilt, shame and doubt, which acts as the mind's security system that produces warnings of threats to the soul's well-being.*

The concept of "Conscience" - is our topic or issue this week - *The Conscience & the Heart of Man.*" We all have a "Conscience" for a reason. (PS: *If your toes begin to hurt, that's because I am stepping on them with this Issue*)

THE CONSCIENCE AND THE HEART OF MAN

(We have a conscience for a reason)

Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command [charge] in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. (St. Paul; 1Timothy 1:18-20 -ESV)

(1 Timothy, Chapter 1) focuses on The Apostle Paul's personal encouragement and exhortation to Timothy, a young Pastor and disciple of Jesus. Paul concludes this section, starting in vs.17 ff by reminding Timothy that the Good News of Christ must remain the focus of his ministry. Paul gave his young friend some advice - some directives: *Stay at the task, Communicate the truth,*

Concentrate on the target, Remember to stand fast, and Obey the command. That's the only way to avoid the spiritual shipwreck suffered by others who failed to keep the faith and a good conscience. (vs. 18-20)

We Christians are in a battle, even though we can't always see or feel it - it's a spiritual battle. We need to fight the good fight, with "faith" - and with "a good conscience." Paul's words to Timothy about keeping the faith and protecting a good conscience were extremely important!

The concept of "Conscience" - is our topic today - God and our Conscience. We all have a "Conscience" for a reason. We are to use it and live by it. Birds don't have a conscience - dogs and cats and animals don't have a conscience - but God has given His human creation, mankind, a conscience.

What is the Human Conscience?

We hear a lot about the human *conscience*, but what exactly does it mean? The general concept of conscience can be found in almost every human culture, but it has a unique and distinctive meaning for Christians. *Everyone has a conscience. It is innate to mankind.*

The conscience is defined as that part of the *human psyche* that induces mental anguish and feelings of guilt when we violate it - and feelings of pleasure and well-being when our actions, thoughts and words are in conformity to our value system. The *conscience* reacts when one's actions, thoughts, and words conform to, or are contrary to, a standard of right and wrong. Webster's Dictionary defines "the Conscience" - as "the sense of what is right or wrong in one's conduct or motives, impelling one toward right action."

I could probably narrow it down to a simple statement such as, "the

conscience is a person's internal alarm clock." It's the voice inside that yells at us when we're about to make a wrong move or do something that will hurt us or someone else. *It's the unexplainable "something" that grabs our attention long enough to ask, "is this right?" Or "I'm not sure I should do this."* In essence, the primary purpose of the conscience is to warn – not to accuse. It will let us know loud and clear when we've taken the wrong road!

God created mankind with a "Conscience" as man's self-judging faculty. *It is a moral awareness that is within all of us. Because God has written His law on man's heart – mankind knows the basic standard of right and wrong. When a person violates that standard, his conscience produces guilt, shame and doubt, which acts as the mind's security system that produces warnings of threats to the soul's well-being. On the other hand, when a "believer or follower of Christ" does God's will, he enjoys the affirmation, assurance, peace, and joy of a "good conscience."*

Every once in a while, we read or hear of a story about someone walking into a police department and confessing, "I did it!" "25 years ago, I robbed a store, or 30 years ago I killed someone." Perhaps we see an interview on TV of an accused murderer or felon who is now in police custody, maybe even serving a prison sentence, and they confess to some other crime saying, "thank God they finally caught me, I don't know how much longer I could have gone on with this on my conscience." [Hence, a guilty Conscience]

The conscience is something clearly inside of us that gives off messages of approval or disapproval. When we talk about having a "guilty conscience," we mean that "guilt" is a message of disapproval from the conscience. To ignore your internal "alarm clock" is dangerous.

Where is the Human Conscience located in man's make-up?

First, in the New Testament (NT) the word for, "conscience" is used 31 times, mostly by St. Paul. The Greek word translated "conscience" in all the NT references is "Suneidesis," meaning "moral awareness" or "moral consciousness." It refers to one's judgment in the area of morality.

Second, the Old Testament (OT) teaches that the conscience is in the "Heart of man." There is no Hebrew term in the Old Testament equivalent to the Greek word in the NT. Perhaps the closest OT term to conscience is "Heart" - comes from the Hebrew word, "Leb" (the inner man or heart of man).

The lack of a Hebrew word for "conscience" may be due to the Jewish worldview, which was communal rather than individual. The Hebrew [or Jew] considered himself as a member of a covenant community that related corporately to God and His laws, rather than as an individual. In other words, the Hebrew was confident in his own position before God – based on this condition: "if the Hebrew nation as a whole was in good fellowship with Him."

So, the word conscience is not found in the Old Testament, but the function of the conscience is; and it is referred to as the Heart. The heart functions as the conscience. After David showed insubordination against the anointed king by cutting off the corner of his robe, "his heart smote him" (1 Sam 24:5), meaning that David's "heart struck him." In other words, his "conscience" bothered him. After Peter's sermon in (Acts 2:37), the audience was "cut to the heart." The heart or conscience may condemn us, but God is greater than our hearts (1 John 3:20). David prays that God

would create for him a *pure heart* to replace his defiled conscience (Psalm 51:10).

According to most Theologians, the context in which the heart is normally used in reference to the conscience is seen in the issue of sin. When a sin is committed the heart protests the act. This confrontation of the heart is the point at which repentance can begin to take place.

A key passage to read is (Romans 2:14-15). Scripture teaches that humans, made in the image of God, have an innate sense of right and wrong, a moral monitor that either "approves or accuses." It gauges whether one is acting in accordance with what he deems to be morally right or wrong. Its judgment can be adversely affected by upbringing, environment, and culture. Therefore, a conscience is not *infallible*. One can be sincere, desiring to do the right thing in accordance with their conscience and can make the wrong moral choice due to a lack of knowledge and life experience.

On the other hand, a world *without conscience* would be completely given over to anarchy and evil. The conscience is a gift from God to help establish a sense of order and well-being.

(Are we seeing today a world without a conscience?)

In modern day language, we can say that "The Human Conscience" *serves as an umpire, which disposes the human to view life situations in a moral/ethical light*, thus judging/determining that some actions are "right" and some are "wrong." The Fall of Mankind however [in Genesis 3] has drastically affected the conscience - but has clearly not destroyed it. Evidence of *this innate sense of right and wrong* is a general agreement in *all cultures* about certain basic ethical issues (e.g.,

murder, incest, pedophilia, lying, stealing, etc.).

How is one's conscience developed or improved? A human being may actually be sincerely following a wrong moral standard that deepens convictions about the "rightness" of certain actions. *Consider St. Paul before his conversion to Christ:*

Saul (as he was then known) persecuted Christians with a seemingly "good conscience" (Acts 23:1). His deep-seated conviction (i.e., *his conscience*) told him "do right" and his ethical standard was "it is right to persecute Christians." Thus, he followed his conscience, but what he did was wrong, because his deep-seated conviction (i.e., *his conscience*) was ill-informed! God needed to change Paul's convictions, which He did—beginning on the *Damascus Road* with Paul's salvation in Christ (Acts 9).

Then, as a believer in Christ and a devoted follower of Jesus Christ; The Apostle Paul in the NT notes that "*our consciences*" are built on universal, divinely given moral principles, which are written in human hearts and placed in us by God before we are even able to think about right or wrong. (Rom. 2:15; 13:5; 1 Cor.8:7, 12, 10:25; 1 Tim. 1:18-20)

Paul even adds these words in 1 Timothy 1, "*that keeping the faith and protecting a good conscience are extremely important – and if one fails to keep a clear conscience, he will suffer a shipwrecked faith.*" God considers a pure conscience a very valuable thing – one that keeps our faith on a steady course. Likewise, God views a tainted conscience as detestable and worthy of judgment.

Should I let my Conscience be my guide?

Well... that could be a dangerous thing. You could be a "sociopath" [one deemed by the medical profession as having no sense of right or wrong.] Sociopaths have a

conscience, but it's wired or programmed differently. One's Conscience is NOT always right and is therefore an unsafe guide. *The Bible speaks of an evil conscience* (Hebrews 10:22); *a weak and defiled conscience* (1 Cor.8:7-12), and *a conscience "seared with a hot iron"* (1 Timothy 4:2). *The conscience is variable and therefore untrustworthy.*

It is only when the *conscience* is enlightened and sensitive to the Word of God that it may be safely followed.

(Hebrews 10:22) says: "*Let us draw near [to Christ] with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean [purged with the blood of Christ] from an evil CONSCIENCE and our bodies washed with pure water.*"

I contend as does the Bible - that only the *Word of God* is the safe and reliable guide for the conscience of the Christian or child of God!

Remember, I said earlier that the human conscience is our God-given "personal alarm system- a warning system." Everybody has one. *The key to our different behaviors is in the programming or input.* Why else would two people act so differently about the same offense – one with great sorrow and guilt and one without any remorse or guilt.

Just as computers can be programmed positively or negatively, the conscience can be programmed with the Truth of God or the Depravity of the world. Those who input or program the mind, the will and the motions with the Truth of God will be much more disposed to respond with greater remorse when they sin or do wrong, *as opposed to people who never put anything of eternal value into the conscience.* It's no wonder we react and respond differently.

God gave us the conscience to protect us. Although we are wise to obey what we hear from the conscience, the purpose of the conscience is *NOT* to guide us – it is to *WARN* us! We

need an infallible [error free, not capable of making mistakes] guide, and our conscience is not infallible. Today, our children and even adults are being falsely told that there are no moral absolutes and that everything is relative. Values are being taught that we would have never considered 40-50 years ago. Therefore, people have a faulty monitoring system or warning system today, more than ever, because they have been programmed with garbage, or lies, or fake news.

I remind you...the conscience is a "warning system." However, I believe the Holy Spirit of God works in conjunction with the conscience. When the conscience sends the signal, the Holy Spirit of God reveals the reason for obeying the alarm. The Spirit urges us and guides us and reminds us that we are accountable to God. People without God [unsaved people] have the alarm system – but they don't have the *Spirit of God* to explain or guide them or to set it off. Unbelievers can't say yes or no to their conscience. Believers in God in Christ can say NO! The Holy Spirit also affirms when we do what is right!

My Concluding Thoughts and Summary

Here's what I also know from experience - When a person becomes a Christian, his/her conscience is heightened and sensitized, as it were, by being informed both by Holy Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit.

This is in many ways a lifelong process. When we then violate personal, societal or biblical standards, we experience guilt. This is one of the blessings of the *conscience* for the believer. This "security system" keeps us from doing what might prove injurious to ourselves and to others, and ultimately to our relationship with God.

When we willfully sin, the conscience in conjunction with the Holy Spirit causes us to experience guilt. We are

then prompted to *confess our sins and repent (1 John 1:9)* and experience the love and forgiveness of God. This is now the ongoing process of how we deal with guilt in our lives—*via confession* (i.e., agreeing with God about our sin). You never want to get to the place where your conscience is *“seared or dead” or turned off* to the alarm system.

If a *conscience* is disobeyed repeatedly or if a believer refuses to develop the deep-seated convictions about issues of life and *the maturing process is then halted, then one’s sensitivity to moral issues soon becomes dulled*. If this continues, then the result is a *“seared conscience.”* You don’t want this! The way you avoid this is by instant obedience to the alarm. *The minute you sense or hear the alarm, do what is right*. Don’t ignore it and later find yourself reaping the consequences for making wrong choices.

You must also train the conscience. Study and renew your mind with God’s Word. Stay in the Truth and your conscience will sound off loud and clear when you are headed in the wrong direction.

The conscience responds to good programming. Input becomes output. The conscience is trainable, and we program our conscience with God’s standards and laws. The Bible says, *“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind and then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good and pleasing will.”* (Romans 12:2)

Remember - *The goal of the Christian believer, then, is to develop a mature conscience.* Amen.

“To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.”
(Titus 1:15-16)





PRAYER LIST

✓ Continuing Prayers for loss: All the families that have lost loved ones this past year. Remember those who continue to lose loved ones due to COVID 19.

✓ Continuing Prayers for physical needs: Rita McManus, Maria Hatfield, Gloria-Lynn Fernandez, Betty Matson, Ronaldo Claveria, Alex Figueroa

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Ministry Needs: Pastor Brandon Myers, Our Deacons, Financial support.

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Sister Ministries: BIEM Ministries, Orchard Church, Pastors Davis, Billow, Eddy, Vitel, Ebi and Esther Perinbaraj, Gaetano and Krista Paolino

✓ Continuing Prayers for Spiritual Needs: Leonard Hatfield, Carol Pelfrey's family, Daniel Ruehlman, George Bizadellis

✓ Continuing Prayers for: The spread of the Gospel, Our Government, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Neighbors, Our Families, Pray for our members that have lost employment and for those who still have jobs and need to interact with others on a daily basis. Pray for those still working that God will protect. Lift up all our health professionals and their families who are on the front line of this pandemic especially Mylin and Errol Lardizabal and Liza Mitchell. Erwin Lickmann pray for wisdom regarding future living arrangements for Elizabeth and himself. Mikaelle (Mikey) at Olivet Nazarene College.

Kurt Pazdra II, Pastoral Intern at The Orchard. His meniscus in that knee was ruptured on the inside and I had orthopedic surgery this past Friday. "I am now in recovery and will begin physical therapy in the oncoming weeks. Please pray that I will be healed, well rested, relaxed, that I will trust God for a full recovery, be responsible to tend to my knee, and be patient while I am very inactive and dependent upon others for a season."

Pray that the LORD will anoint Pastor Brandon Myers with wisdom and desire to accomplish His goals for the First Baptist Church of Niles. Pray for Kaiti their daughters Eva and Audrey, and son, Patrick.

First Baptist Church of Niles

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